Erie County Public Safety Newsletter

Special Interest Articles:

- Spotlight Series : CAD Part I

- Welcome New Staff!

Erie County Department of Public Safety

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 County Executive

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Letter from County Executive Barry Grossman

Have you ever wondered how many calls are taken at the Erie County 911 Public Safety Center in one year, how long the average 911 call process is, or the average dispatch time for each call? In 2012, the number of calls taken at the Erie County 911 Center was 188,273 – an average of 516 calls each day! To date, the Center has received 31,811 calls, keeping them on track for close to the same volume of calls as last year, if not more. As you can see, there is no rest for the weary at the 911 Center.

In January and February, 2013, the 911 call average processing time was one minute and 16 seconds from the time a call was received to the time it was sent to the dispatcher.   The average dispatch time for January/February, 2013, was 28 seconds. This is the time the information is received from the call taker to dispatch time.   The 911 Center is a 24 hour operation with no less than 2-3 call takers per shift, along with six dispatchers and a shift commander.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the call takers who first receive the 911 call and initially assess the situation; the dispatchers, who are given the call from the call taker, assesses the needs of the call and dispatch the appropriate agency or agencies; the shift commanders, who are there every shift to ensure that calls are handled in a professional and appropriate manner; the fire departments, EMS workers, and police officers who work tirelessly every day to protect the lives and property of every citizen in Erie County. Our residents can rest easy knowing that there are competent, dedicated members in this community who stand at the ready at your most dire time of need.

Barry Grossman,
Erie County Executive

Letter from Public Safety Director, Todd Geers

Pennsylvania state law (Act 56) governing the disbursement of wireless telephone 9-1-1 fees is a complicated mess and by its own devices has spawned an exponentially cannibalistic appetite which threatens self-destruction. In other words, Act 56 will run out of money in two years or less! Referencing the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) funding table below, approved – yet unfunded – expenditures for 2012-2013 sit at $68,000,000, doubling each successive year. Without immediate legislative intervention and a wholesale paradigm shift in how we all think and operate, fiscal uncertainty awaits Pennsylvania's counties.

Recent 9-1-1 Funding Amounts			
Wireline	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Funding	$79.4m	$72.2m	$63.9m
Voice over IP	**2009**	**2010**	**2011**
Funding	$10.5m	$14.4m	$17.4m
Wireless	**2010-11**	**2011-12**	**2012-13**
Approved	$126.1m	$142.4m	$171.3m
Funded	$111.0m	$110.7m	$103.3m
Unfunded	**$15.1m**	**$31.7m**	**$68.0m**

PEMA is encouraging the General Assembly to amend language in Act 56 to develop a new distribution formula for wireless funds and is encouraging counties to promote regionalization efforts to benefit from economies of scale. According to PEMA, a lack of technology standardization amongst the counties limits first responder interoperability; funding constraints imposed by Act 56 dampens innovation; duplication of technology encourages inefficiency; and, competition for funding promises program functional bankruptcy. Reducing state-wide 9-1-1 expenditures and designing a smarter funds disbursement system effectively erects a safety barrier at the proverbial "fiscal cliff."

As a progressive agency that embraces forward-leaning change, the Erie County Department of Public Safety is investigating an exciting new initiative called the Northern Tier Regional Telecommunications Project (NTRTP). Nine northwestern Pennsylvania NTRTP counties recently executed an intergovernmental cooperation agreement to share the same 9-1-1 telephony system. Virtual consolidation of resources is an increasingly popular, viable, and cost-saving movement gaining traction nationwide amongst 9-1-1 centers. To virtually consolidate means to share backroom servers, systems, and licenses with more than one 9-1-1 facility. Whereas past practice meant each 9-1-1 center had its own system—e.g. CAD, telephone, GIS, voice recorders, and radio, the new trend leverages modern, powerful computing components, saving centers precious dollars by reducing upfront equipment purchase costs and expensive annual maintenance and software support contracts.

Actual cost figures are being calculated as I write, but preliminary discussions with the NTRTP parties indicate a 50% savings for Erie County. Such potential savings are fully supported by PEMA and encourage this department to explore other potential virtual consolidation opportunities. Let's work smarter, not harder.
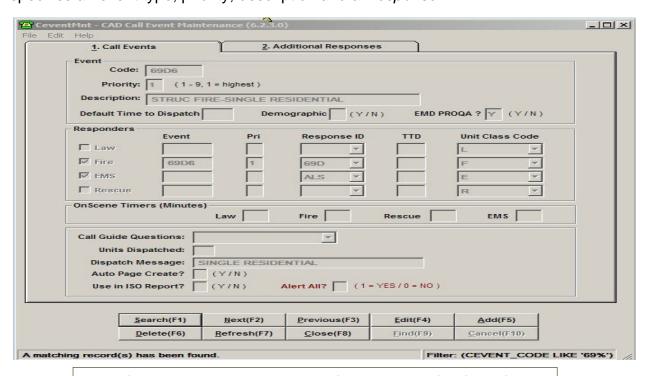
Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) –
How it Works: Part I – Event Codes & Response Plan

Erie County Department of Public Safety uses InterAct CAD (computer aided dispatch) in the day-to-day 9-1-1 emergency dispatch operations. The function of CAD is to make recommendations to the dispatcher for the correct emergency response agency and equipment to any municipality in Erie County and limited areas in surrounding counties and states. Each municipality, whether it's a city, borough or township is divided into "zones". As of 10-18-2012, Erie County is divided into 207 zones, referred to ESZs (Emergency Service Zones).
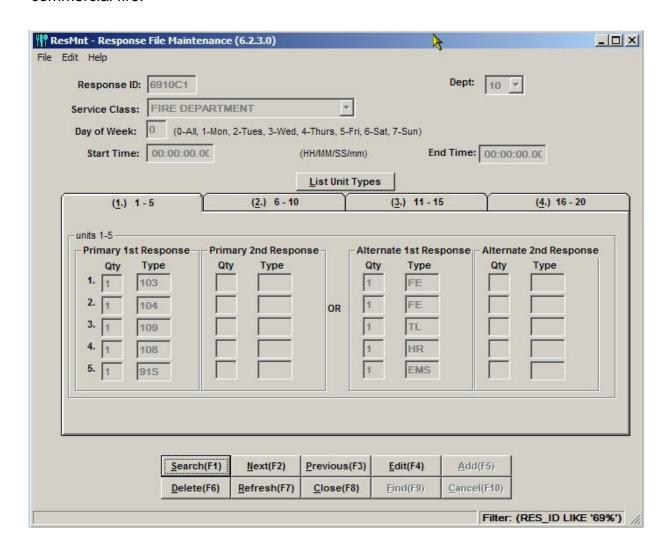
There are currently 2663 EMS, Fire and Law Event codes in CAD. Each of these *Event Codes* has a response attached to them. Erie County Department of Public Safety dispatches 6 EMS departments, 26 fire departments and 9 law enforcement agencies. Each of the *Response Codes* is built specifically for each agency. Each of the agencies has at least 1 zone, with some departments have numerous zones (for example: Corry – 1 zone, Edinboro – 14 zones, Erie – 44 zones). Each of these zones can have a unique response to them, so they create even more response codes.

The first item that is created is an *Event Code.* The event code is a unique code which specifies an event type, priority, description and a *Response ID.*

In this example, the Event code is a 69D6, which is a single residential structure fire. The Fire Response ID for this event code is 69D and the EMS Response ID for this event code is ALS.
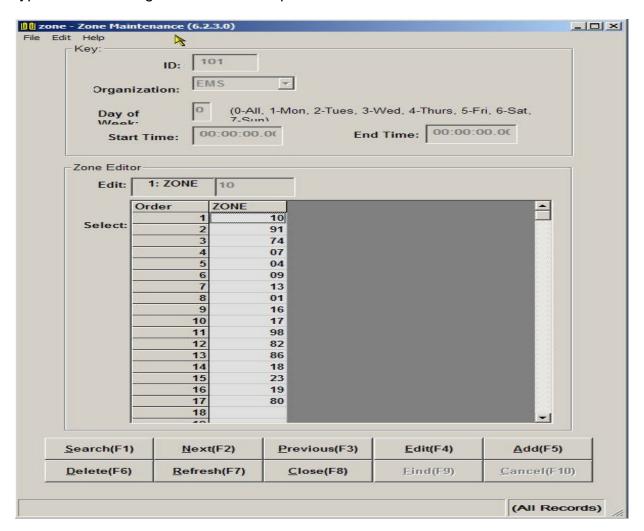
Next, a *Response Code* is created. The *Response Code* is the recommendation made by CAD to the dispatcher of the units to respond to a specific type of an emergency. In this example, this is the response that Corry Fire Dept wanted for a first alarm on a commercial fire.

Notice the fields available on the form. *Response ID* is the specific response built for a commercial fire. How I designed the codes: 69 (structure fire), 10 (Station 10), C (Commercial) and 1 (first alarm).

In this example, 2 Engines, 1 Ladder Truck, 1 Rescue truck and Ambulance will be recommended; 1 – 103 (Corry Engine 103), 1 – 104 (Corry Engine 104), 1 -109 (Corry Ladder 109), 1 – 108 (Corry Rescue Truck) and 1 – 91S (Corry BLS Ambulance). In the event one or more of these units are not available because of another call or maintenance, the CAD will default to the "OR" function.

Because the assignment for a commercial fire is 2 engines, a ladder, a rescue truck and an ambulance, CAD will make that recommendation. For illustration purposes, Engine 103 goes out of service for maintenance; the "OR" function will kick in because the assignment calls for 2 engines. CAD will start going through Available Units using the *Zone Order* (shown later) to find the next available vehicle which is typed as a Fire Engine to fulfill the requirement for the event.

In this illustration, CAD would start at the top of the preset Zone Order (Corry has only 1 zone which is 101) and start sifting through to find the required vehicle.
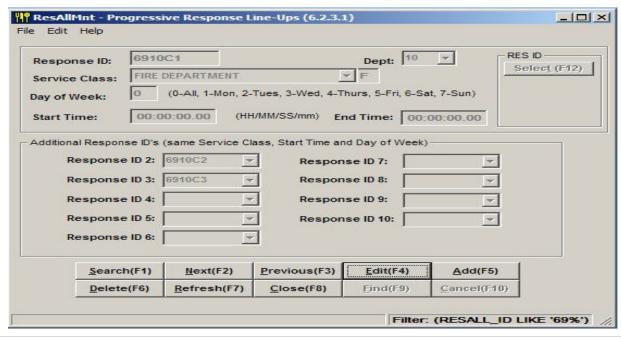
In order to make a link between the *Event Code* and the *Response Code,* the *Alternate Response Level Maintenance* form is used.
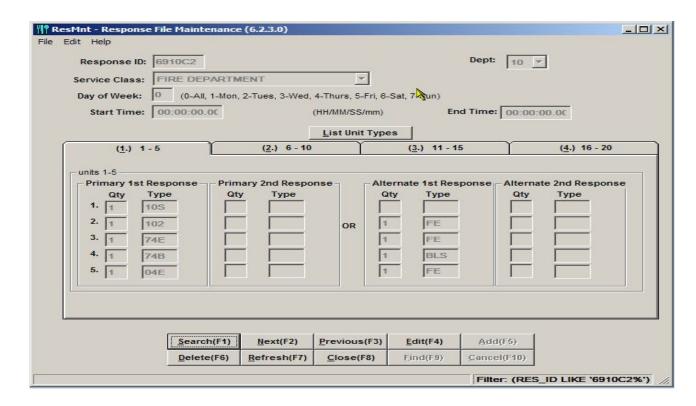

The *Alternate Response Code* tells CAD that when a 69C1 needs dispatched in Zone 101, the *Event Code* for that fire department has a *Response Code* of 6910C1.

Because of the reality that there may be a call for additional units to the fire, the *Progressive Response Code* needs to be employed.

The *Progressive Response Code* gives the dispatcher the ability to use a dropdown to see what units are recommended for a second and in this case a third alarm assignment.

The necessary element to make CAD work the way an Incident Commander expects is:

What equipment do you want at a specific emergency? This requires the following:

- What type of equipment do you need?
- What zone is the emergency in and what is the zone order for that zone? This determines where the equipment is going to come from.

Do you really want your department and two mutual aid departments responding to a CO or smoke alarm? The most efficient way to build responses into CAD is to have the essential equipment dispatched and then when arriving on scene and realizing you need more equipment, ask for a second alarm. Because the second alarm was previously set up in CAD, there is no need to ask for individual pieces of apparatus If there is a need for a specific piece of equipment that can be asked for and will be dispatched.

Meet Public Safety's NEWEST Telecommunicators!

Jacqualyn Polka

Jacqualyn is originally from Niagara Falls, NY. She has been a member of the United States Air Force for almost 5 years, now serving as a combat medic reservist with 2 years of war-time overseas. She wanted to become a Telecommunicator because it represents new challenges with new obstacles. She wants to continue to help the public in a way similar to her role in the Armed Forces. "I am hoping to gain a stronger knowledge of Public Safety, while instilling the core values of the Erie County Department of Public Safety."

Mike Cacchione

Before beginning the Public Safety Academy, Mike was previously employed as a Police Officer with Union City and Meadville. He also worked as a counselor for Abraxas Youth & Family Services. Mike still serves the community as a part-time Police Officer in West Mead Township. He wanted this job so he could focus more in the field of Public Safety, and use his background as a Police Officer to uphold the traditions that ECDOPS has made over the years. "I hope to gain more knowledge about the entire field of Public Safety, including Fire and EMS."

Nicole Dorman

Prior to the Academy, Nicole Dorman held the position as EMA Secretary at the Erie County Department of Public Safety. She has decided to broaden her horizons with the exciting new challenge of becoming a 9-1-1 Telecommunicator. "I am looking forward to using the skills that I have learned to help the community, and to facilitate quality 9-1-1 customer service."

Pictured from left to right are: Jacqualyn Polka, Mike Cacchione, and Nicole Dorman

A Thought from the Instructor:

"Working with this class has been challenging and exciting. Every day, it is inspiring to teach them, and witness their vivacity for their new careers. I am impressed by such a group of students so conscientious about learning and truly dedicated to helping our community."

Kale Asp, Assistant 9-1-1 Coordinator/Relief Shift Commander, Interim Training Administrator